

Lent Devotional March 21, 2026

Scripture

Exodus 2:23-3:15

23 After a long time the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned under their slavery and cried out. Their cry for help rose up to God from their slavery. 24 God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 25 God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them.

1 Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness and came to Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. 3 Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight and see why the bush is not burned up." 4 When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." 5 Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." 6 He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

7 Then the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9 The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. 10 Now go, I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." 11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" 12 He said, "I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

13 But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I am who I am." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I am has sent me to you.'" 15 God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you':

*This is my name forever,
and this my title for all generations.*

Devotion

The Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Sterling '88/'98

It's a famous passage—the "burning bush" call of Moses. I wonder how many sermons we've preached—or listened to—on this passage? We've come up with dozens of "novel" ideas about how to approach the bizarre story that Moses had a life-changing dialogue with a shrubbery, and have even been encouraged to keep an eye peeled for "our" burning bush, like we'd miss that? Well, I did once read in a commentary that burning bushes were not "unusual" in the hot deserts of that part of the world, so Moses *could* have missed it, but then, this one talked.

The first “voice” we hear in the passage is the griping. Aren’t we all griping about something? Right now, the American “gripe machine” is at fever pitch. Israel perfected the art, apparently—not that they didn’t have good reason. Of course, slavery in Egypt was bad, but later, they will gripe that they left it and “the fleshpots of Egypt” behind. Griping can be such a fickle thing. The amazing thing is that “God took notice of them.”

The next voice is God, addressing Moses from the Burning Bush Boom Box—actually more of a Bluetooth speaker, as it just relayed the voice, I guess. God was about to share the divine remedy for Israel’s suffering, and as God often does, God chose an unlikely instrument. Moses certainly had the political connections, but beyond that, he was adequately flawed.

Voice number three was Moses, answering the burning bush call with what must have been a squeaky “Here I am.” Woody Allen once said that two-thirds of success is showing up. Moses shows up, but not without much hesitation. The rest is history.

We seem to have the griping down, but will we hear God, trying to connect with us over the groaning? This is the Lenten question, isn’t it? And when our burning bush call comes, will we show up, or just keep queuing the excuses? May we be more like that little dog in front of the phonograph trumpet in the old RCA logo, labeled appropriately, “His Master’s Voice.”

Prayer

God, forgive us for listening but not hearing, speaking but not measuring our words or remembering Whose word is more important, and for inadvertently superimposing our “solutions” over Yours, then blaming You when they fail. Give us the courage to show up, speak Your truth, and act on it. Amen.